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“I was bent on retaining my exalted position.”—Page 86.  
[Front.

**TO-DAY AND YESTERDAY.**







# TO-DAY AND YESTERDAY;

OR,

A STORY OF SUMMER AND WINTER  
HOLIDAYS.

By EMMA MARSHALL,

AUTHOR OF "GRACE BUXTON," "THE LITTLE PEAT-CUTTERS,"  
"THREE LITTLE SISTERS," ETC. ETC.

LONDON:

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# T O - D A Y .

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## CHAPTER I.

### SUMMER HOLIDAYS.

BOXES and carpet-bags were piled in the hall, and there was an unusual stir and excitement in an old-fashioned house in the busiest street of Torchester, one June morning. It was not, alas! the June morning of which poets write, and which we use as a simile when we wish to express anything which is very bright and smiling. For this morning was cold, and cheerless, and stormy; the sky was all one leaden hue; and the rain fell in torrents, which was enough to damp the

energies of the most enterprising travellers, and make them look back regretfully to the comfortable home they were about to exchange for lodgings.

These travellers of whom I am writing, however, were not very easily depressed. The nineteenth of June had been looked forward as a festival for many weeks, and they were not disposed to turn it into a fast. Boys and girls, whose ages vary from fifteen to eight and ten, to say nothing of a troop of tinies not yet out of the nursery, are not subject to atmospheric pressure like their elders; and there was fun in the notion of a drive on the top of the Leigh Sudbury coach, in waterproofs and Mackintoshes, and fun in the idea of all packing into a small house and doing what they liked for a whole month. No lessons—no restrictions as to gloves or tidiness; for Leigh Sudbury was little more than a village by the sea—not a fashionable watering place, with an esplanade and public rooms, and all the accompaniments of dress, *en règle*, and particularly of behaviour and

demeanour of an evening, when the band played, whatever the roughness and freedom of the morning might be.

The little Freemantles had no mother; their father was a widower; and they were left to the care of a governess, who was faithfully attached to them, and had, since their mother's death, been incessantly with them, persistently and nobly refusing to take any holidays or recreation in which the children did not share. But the continuous strain of two years told at last, and poor Miss Parsons had broken down, and was obliged to see a doctor, who ordered perfect rest for six weeks, and freedom from care and anxiety.

"The children will all go to the sea when the boys' school breaks up," Mr. Freemantle had said; "perhaps the change to Leigh Sudbury will be of use to Miss Parsons."

"Nonsense, my dear sir," the doctor had replied hastily. "I beg your pardon; but holidays at the sea-side are no holidays to any one concerned but the children themselves. I know that by experience. That



poor woman is quite worn out; she is no longer young; and, unless you give her the needful rest, she will have to give you up altogether."

The idea of such a misfortune settled the point with Mr. Freemantle. Miss Parsons was despatched to some relatives in the Isle of Wight, and Mr. Freemantle wrote to his wife's sister, to ask her if she would mind spending a month at the sea with his children, as it was impossible for him to leave his office altogether, and he thought the elder girl and boy too old to be left to the companionship of servants.

Miss Wilford had not seen much of the little Freemantles. She was one of a large family, and had lived for some years with a younger sister, to whom she had always been more like a mother than anything else. She had married a foreigner; and Miss Wilford's life had been, since her parents' death, spent in Germany. Correspondence and occasional visits had kept up an interest in these children of her sister, Myra; but her busy useful

life had been led apart from theirs ; and when she received Mr. Freemantle's letter, she felt glad to come to them, and learn to know them, and love them for their own sakes. So, in spite of the length of the journey from Heilbronn to Leigh Sudbury, she determined to make the effort, and arranged to meet them there on the 20th of June. If anything could increase the Freemantles' curiosity to see their Aunt Louie, it was the fact that she was to bring their little German cousin, Meta, with her, and many were the speculations as to this foreign relation—whether she was tall or short—pretty or ugly—cross or kind—or, in other words, “grumpy or jolly.”

“If it wouldn't rain so awfully, and make nurse cross, I shouldn't care,” said Edith Freemantle, the eldest girl ; “but she says I must go inside the coach, and wear this wretched old hat.”

“So like a girl,” said Stephen wrathfully, “to care about a hat, just as if the porters at the railway, or the coachman, would look at it, or you either. Mind, Hugh,” Stephen

went on, addressing his next brother, "I am to have the box-seat."

"Well, I wish we were off," said Edith, looking at her watch—her mother's watch, which had been confided to her on her fifteenth birthday, a fortnight before—"it is ten minutes to two, and the omnibus ought to be here."

The elder children were all at the dining-room window, looking out on the wet street, through which drenched foot-passengers might be seen patiently pursuing their way; and cabs and omnibuses passed and re-passed in quick succession, for this was the busiest time of the day in the High Street of Torchester.

"At last!" Stephen exclaimed, as the omnibus from the Half Moon stopped at the door; and he plunged headlong down-stairs, and began to attack the boxes and bags, and haul them by main force to the door.

"Plenty of time, sir," said the man, who was standing on the door-step when Stephen opened it; "plenty of time; take it easy."

"What a goose he is!" said Hugh, "pounding away at that luggage, as if he could do any good."

"You never trouble yourself about anything," said Edith, scornfully; "we all know that. Do take care, Berry,"—to her little brother,— "what a racket you all make!"

At last the whole party were under weigh. Their father accompanied them to settle them in their new abode; but as sleeping accommodation would be small at Myrtle Villa when Aunt Louie arrived, he would only stay one night. The omnibus rattled off with its heavy load to the station; and then there were whole and half tickets to take to Tor-mouth, which cost Mr. Freemantle a great deal of counting and re-counting. Three servants and eight children cannot be moved without a considerable amount of trouble. At last the second-class carriage was filled, and the luggage deposited in the van, and Mr. Freemantle resigned himself to the *Standard*, after pulling up the window and saying to Stephen, who remonstrated—

"The rain is driving in my face—what horrible weather—it seems the same all over the country, if that is any satisfaction—keep your legs to yourself, Hugh."

At Tormouth there was another turning out, and another settlement. A large old-fashioned vehicle, half coach, half omnibus, stood in the yard by the station; and ladders were put up at the side to assist the ascent of the outside passengers, while nurse and the three younger children and Edith were shut up inside. Edith remonstrated, but nurse was obdurate.

"We don't want to have you to nurse, Miss Edith, at Leigh Sudbury; and you know a drop of rain gives you cold."

"I shall stand a poor chance to-day, then," said Edith, giving her little sister a somewhat rough push, as she passed her, to the other end of the omnibus; "for I have had a hundred drops upon me to-day, at least."

"You needn't be so disagreeable, Edith," said little Ida; "you know how cross you always are when you are ill."

If there was wrangling inside the coach—which seemed to surprise two or three country people, who were glad to accept the coachman's offer of shelter in such weather—there was plenty of hilarity outside. The boys were supremely happy; and Stephen and Hugh having amicably settled the matter of the box-seat, by both sitting there with the coachman, Mr. Freemantle smoked his cigar in peace. The two younger boys, little fellows in blue serge suits, sat between the maids, and declared that of all jolly things was a coach with three horses, instead of a nasty railway.

"If it didn't rain it would be all very well," said one of the maids, whose hands were rather stiff with holding the big umbrella, and who felt unpleasant drops between her hair and her collar from the spoke, which was about all the benefit she received from it. "If it didn't rain I should like it, I daresay, Master Frank; but seven miles of this is a little too much of it. It's pretty country along here, I've heard. I have a cousin who

married a small farmer at Woodlynch, which ain't more than two miles from Sudbury."

It was indeed a pretty country ; purple heather rested the eye with its quiet beauty of colour for miles ; and the hedges were covered with every form and variety of wild roses. The sea was hidden till just as the top of the hill before the descent into Leigh Sudbury was reached. There it lay in a wide expanse before the travellers, dull and gray like the sky ; but whether with "God's smile upon it," or dark and sombre, always conveying a sense of majesty, and width, and strength, which no other created thing ever does. Leigh Sudbury nestled in the valley, which lay between lofty cliffs, and its picturesque, irregular village street was parallel with the sea. Myrtle Lodge stood in this street. It had a thatched roof, and a porch covered with clematis and roses ; and the windows were mostly at the back, and close to the sea. The woman who was in the house, and undertook the cooking department, looked with less astonishment at the number of children,

and at the pile of luggage, than you perhaps might have done. She was well accustomed to see Myrtle Lodge peopled like a bee-hive, and her composure was not in the least disturbed. This yearly exodus of the Freemantles was taken as a matter of course by their own servants; and, in spite of persistent rain, smallness of space, a few grumblings, and a little wrangling as to which room should be appointed to Edith and Ida, and which to Stephen and Hugh, the whole party were sound asleep in their respective dormitories before the church clock struck eleven that night.



## CHAPTER II.

## RAINY DAYS.

MR. FREEMANTLE left Leigh Sudbury early the next morning, in mist and rain, and Stephen and Hugh went with him to the Feathers' Inn.

"I shall meet your Aunt Louisa in Torchester," he said to the boys from the top of the coach, "and she will come on here by the same train as we travelled by yesterday; mind you behave well to her, and let her have more peace than poor Miss Parsons has had of late; don't get into any scrape. I shall come over on Saturday and see how you are. Good-bye."

The horses started off as Mr. Freemantle

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spoke, and the two boys were left standing on the road.

"That's the gentleman whose family came last night to Myrtle Cottage," the waiter at the Feathers' Inn remarked to the barmaid, "the place is filling fast now."

"Nice weather for them," said the barmaid, retreating into the house, "it is set in for wet. There was a new moon yesterday, and the farther the new moon from midnight, the worse the weather."

"Did you hear that, Stephen?" asked Hugh, "a grand look-out for us."

"Oh, it will clear up; it can't rain like this for ever," said Hugh, who was of a sanguine temperament; "it has never stopped since yesterday morning at ten o'clock; it must clear up soon."

But the rain did not stop, in spite of the earnest wishes of the whole Freemantle family. The arrival of the last coach was something to look forward to, otherwise there was no break in the day. And though the elder boys made continuous raids into the

"Berry says so," said Ida, who was a matter-of-fact prosaic little maiden, "but I don't believe he does. He has mixed her up in his mind with pictures, and what you and the boys and nurse say."

"You are a great deal too much in the middle of the bed, Ida," was Edith's next remark; "and why have you done up your hair in that ridiculous number of plaits, as if it would or could have any wave in it by the sea?"

"Oh, I had nothing else to do, and I thought I should like to practise having my hair like Meta's. It took me half an hour to do, and is very uncomfortable."

"What a stupid child you are," was the response; "why, one of Meta's plaits is as thick as all your little rats' tails put together. I don't care about Meta," continued Edith; "she is a little prim thing, and talks as if she were picking all her words out of a dictionary."

"But fancy our talking German as well as she talks English," was Ida's last remark, as

she lost consciousness, and dreamed confused dreams of Meta, and her own mother, and Aunt Louie, while the rain, the relentless rain, pelted against the windows, and the sea moaned upon the great bank of pebbles, which girt the beach for miles along the coast.

The next morning was fine, or, more properly speaking, fair, for the sun did not dispel the clouds, and only shone out now and then with a fitful uncertain radiance. Nevertheless, the children hailed the improvement in the weather as a promise of complete clearance, and they were all going out as soon as breakfast was over, when Aunt Louie called them—

“We have not had prayers, children. Shall I read? or will Edith? or Stephen?”

Both Edith and Stephen looked astonished.

“We never read prayers, Aunt Louie—that is to say, Papa does sometimes, and Miss Parsons did last year when we were at Lynmouth; but of course we could not have prayers by ourselves.”

"I don't see the *of course*," said Aunt Louie; "but any way I will be chaplain to-day if you will let me. Call the servants, or ring the bell, please, Stephen, and fetch your Bibles."

"Our Bibles!" Edith exclaimed.

"Have you not got a Bible?" asked Meta, in her slow deliberate voice.

Edith only shrugged her shoulders as an answer, and sent to fetch her own and Ida's. The boys had not brought theirs—only their prayer-books for Sunday.

Perhaps these children had never listened so attentively to anything as to the second lesson for the day, which Aunt Louie read in her sweet clear voice.

"It was such a sea-side chapter," little Frank said afterwards. The story of the two ships moored by the Lake of Gennesaret, and of Him who entered into one, and taught the people as they stood on the sea-shore. Then how He had spoken the word of command to the toiling and dispirited disciples, and the net was let down and was so filled

by fish that it broke, and the ship was ready to sink with its unwonted load.

Aunt Louie read in that way which interests and arrests listeners, young and old, and the children never again, during the month at Leigh Sudbury, wished to forego the Bible reading and the prayers, which seemed to have a new and fresh meaning to them.

Aunt Louie had a sweet, but rather sad face. She was just at that point of life when retrospect is more to us than looking forward, except, indeed, that looking forward beyond time and the grave, to the other and better country where many loved ones are gathered in, which becomes more and more habitual as our store grows in Paradise.

As the days passed on at Leigh Sudbury, the little Freemantles felt increasingly attracted towards their aunt, and were anxious to win her good opinion. Ida and Meta made a strong friendship, and little words of German became current amongst them, which they learned from their cousin.

Meta's home atmosphere was a different one to that of the Freemantles. The simplicity of German habits, of which she told her cousins, amazed them. All knitting and needlework seemed familiar to her active fingers, and though she was only a year older than Ida, she mended her own clothes, and not only dressed herself and plaited her thick light hair with marvellous rapidity, but performed the same office for her aunt, who was never strong.

Her cousins' astonishment at Meta's handiwork reached its height when one morning she was seen tucking up the sleeves of her frock, wearing an apron of the cook's, and going into the kitchen to make an omelette for her aunt's luncheon. Ida was instantly seized with a desire to do the same, and was greatly aggrieved when nurse, snatching the basin from her hand, declared she would "cover herself with flour which it would take a month to get off," and forbade her to go into the kitchen again.

"Is Aunt Winifred very poor?" Edith

asked of Miss Wilford one day, as they sat on the beach together.

"Poor! no, my dear, certainly not. Your Uncle Herman is a banker at Heilbronn, and has a very nice house outside the town."

"But Meta seems to do things that only servants do—as cooking and mending stockings. It seems so odd."

"Perhaps it does to your English ideas. It was a little odd to me when I first went to Germany with your Aunt Winifred; but it is a happy healthful life which the German women lead; and if the practical part of domestic duties assume a great importance, accomplishments are not forgotten. Music, drawing, and graver studies form just as much a part of Meta's and Freda's education as knitting, needlework, and baking. Meta speaks English well, and reads it easily. She is rather more behind in French, but that is natural, as of course she has learned English from her mother and me; and your Uncle Cecil is also a partner in the bank, so that



there is no want of the English element in the children's lives."

"Don't you think us very different to our cousins, Aunt Louie?" Edith asked. "I know you do."

"Yes, you are very different," Aunt Louie answered. "You recal to me my own childhood, and I almost live it over again."

"You think us selfish and undisciplined, I am certain," Edith went on, letting the pebbles drop one by one through her fingers with one hand, and replenishing the stock with the other. The story she had been reading lay open by her side, and her whole attitude was listless and idle. "I think we are selfish," Edith said; "but I expect other families are as bad. Boys like Stephen and Hugh are always a bother, unless they are prigs, and as to the little ones, they will grow to be the same; but, except model people like the Welthusens, I think we are no worse than others."

"My dear Edith, that is always a poor consolation, and a very foolish way of looking

at evil. No single man, woman, or child on God's earth can live to himself—he must influence others, one way or the other. A Christian's plain duty is to see to it that he makes those around him better—that he helps others in difficulties, smoothes down rough places, comforts in sorrow, rejoices in joy; in short, lives out of the little narrow round of self in the ever-widening horizon of great and universal love."

"Aunt Louie," Edith began, after a minute's pause, "I should not wish every one to be like Meta. She worries me by always taking the smallest plate of fruit, and saying she does not want any more cake, if there is not enough left to go round the second time, and all these sort of things. Then she is so neat and prim; and it fidgets me to see her picking up stitch after stitch in her stocking. Oh, dear, that is a sort of perfection I am afraid I don't want to reach; and I know she thinks us like bears, and very rude to each other. Does not she?"

"I am not going to answer for poor little

Meta's thoughts," said Aunt Louie. "I can tell you that she is neither perfect nor thinks herself perfect. She and her brothers and sisters have their troubles, like all of us; for Freda is passionate, and Herman is tyrannical, and little Winnie is perhaps spoiled; but Meta has always been taught to put herself last, and now she is eleven years old, it has become natural to her. Then, I do believe the spring of action is the right one with her. I believe it is love for Him who loved her, and gave Himself for her."

Soon after, Miss Wilford went home to write some letters, and she was left to her own reflections.

Her conversation with Aunt Louie had sprung from several little scenes which had disturbed the peace of Myrtle Cottage during the last few days—scenes of wrangling and disputes which I fear are not so uncommon amongst brothers and sisters as they ought to be. The weather had been very stormy and wet. This had been almost the first really fine morning when sitting out on the

beach was practicable, and the confinement had doubtless been a trial of temper to town children who had come to the sea-side for their summer holidays. Meta's blue eyes had been opened wide with astonishment again and again as she heard rough and hard words bandied between her three eldest cousins, and seen them make no attempt to amuse the little ones, but thrust them away when they were troublesome, without any effort to make them good and happy. The afternoon before, things had reached a climax, and Edith had felt self-reproached when she saw Meta had persuaded Ida to give up the enjoyment of an English story which they were reading together, to go and sing German songs with her to the little ones in the dining-room, and play with them, as she did with her own little sisters at home. The contrast between herself and Meta rankled in Edith's mind, for she was far too sensible not to see it, and nurse's injudicious praise of her cousin did not tend to make her feelings towards her more tender and gentle.

## CHAPTER III.

## NIGHT WATCHES.

EDITH FREEMAMTLE had been left about ten minutes to her own reflections, when she heard her brothers' voices near her. They were leaning over a boat, and talking to a fisherman about the haul of mackerel which had been taken that morning; and the fisherman was telling them what a bad season it had been.

"I wish I could go out in the boat one day," said Stephen.

"Well, there's nothing to prevent it, sir," said the fisherman. "Tell you what, I am going out to the crab pots yonder this evening, and I put down a line for rock whittings.

If you young gentlemen like to come too, why, you can do so with pleasure. I'll take you for threepence a head."

"Oh, that will be jolly," said Stephen.

"We will come. What time?"

"I shall be off at six sharp."

"And home?"

"Oh, well, that depends on the fish; say betwixt ten and eleven."

"Humph," said Hugh. "I say that is too late. We have always got to be in at nine to supper."

"Then, we have no line or hooks," said Stephen. "What a bore. How much do they cost?"

"A matter of two shillings or half-a-crown," said the man.

"Oh, then, that settles it," said Hugh. "I have only got fourpence; and you say you will charge threepence for the boat."

"I spent a shilling yesterday, on a stupid rod," said Stephen, "and I have only got ninepence. Perhaps the rod would do?"

The fisherman burst into a loud laugh.

"No; I should rather think it wouldn't do, sir; but I'll let you two have a line between you, if you'll say fourpence a head for the boat, instead of threepence; that's just and fair; ain't it?"

"Oh, thank you," said the boys, delighted. "That will do splendidly. We will come by six."

"That is, unless Aunt Louie or nurse kick up a fuss about it," said Hugh.

"They need not know," said Stephen. "Perhaps we shall be back sooner, and then it will be all right."

At this moment Edith got up from the shingle where she had been sitting, and went up to her brothers. "What have you been talking to that fisherman about, Stephen?"

"Oh! about the fishing; that is all."

"That is not all," said Edith. "I heard you say something about going out in a boat with him. You know Papa said we were none of us to go out in boats without him, or without his leave; besides, remember how sea-sick you always are, Stephen!"

"Am I?" was Stephen's reply, as he dropped down on the beach, and began to throw stones into the water. "Perhaps you forget that you are the same."

"That has nothing to do with it," Edith said. "You certainly ought not to go out fishing without papa's leave; and I shall tell Aunt Louie."

"What will you tell her, pray?" asked Hugh. "You know nothing."

"I heard enough just now to be quite sure you are making some plan to go out in a boat with that man who is now walking up the East Cliff, and I shall prevent it if I can."

"You are a nasty cross thing. I know that," said Hugh. "Anyhow, we shall get out of your way for two hours, and that will be a comfort. No one cares a pin for what you say; do they, Stephen?"

"No; I should rather think not. Sitting reading story-books from morning to night, and never caring what becomes of other people! You should just hear what Selby



and Watson say of their elder sisters. Why, Fanny Selby is ——”

Edith had turned away, and was beyond the reach of her brothers' voices now. Ah! if she had but had influence with those two high-spirited boys,—if she had ever given up herself and her own pleasure for them, how different it would have been. But we must all reap what we sow. Edith's heart swelled with wounded vanity and wounded affection too; for, as in most instances of the same kind, she loved her brothers; only, as they said, she never troubled herself about them. “Very well,” she thought, “they shall do as they like. It must be known at last, and won't papa punish them as they deserve! If I attempt to prevent their going, they will only abuse me, and be impertinent. There surely never were two such boys.”

Edith pursued her way slowly homewards, and was overtaken in a few minutes by Ida, Meta, and Berry, and Frank.

“We have had such a jolly walk,” Berry said, “and picked up such heaps of peri-

winkles from the rocks. We are going to have them for tea," he shouted, thrusting the basket, which was dripping with wet sand and sea-weed, towards Edith, for her inspection.

"Take care, you tiresome child," she said. "Look how you have spoiled my dress; look how all the water is running down it."

Poor little Berry retreated discomfited, while Meta took the basket from him, and said—

"Let me carry it. Look, if you hold it out it will hurt no one."

And Meta kept at a distance from the others, bearing the offending basket at arm's length from herself.

The whole party assembled at dinner, and Aunt Louie proposed a donkey expedition, as the afternoon was so fine, and not too hot. A little antique donkey-carriage was hired for ninepence an hour, and four saddle donkeys at sixpence each.

"I think I would rather sit on the cliff this afternoon, and read, Aunt Louie, if you

don't mind. I am not very fond of donkeys, and ——"

"Very well," said Miss Wilford; "you must please yourself; one of the little ones will be only too glad to take your place. Have you a headache, Edith?"

"No, not exactly; but I would as soon be quiet this afternoon."

Aunt Louie said no more, and the donkey party set off in high spirits.

"They don't care about it," Edith thought. "Oh, dear, what a bother everything is. If there was a croquet party, or anything nice going on, it would be so different; but to be for ever tied to the children is such a nuisance. Aunt Louie seems to prefer their company to mine. It is a comfort I have got this story to read, for there really is nothing else to do."

So Edith Freemantle spent the afternoon on the cliff, and in the interest of the book she was reading forgot everything else. When, at last, she looked at her watch, she was surprised to see how late it was; and, on

reaching Myrtle Cottage, she found that tea was ready, and the other children had returned from their ride. They were full of its delights ; and the little adventure of Frank being thrown over the head of one donkey, and Berry slipping off at the back of another, had given a flavour to the whole expedition. As soon as tea was over, Stephen and Hugh rushed off, and Edith knew where they were going. For a moment, as she heard her brothers' retreating footsteps down the village street, her heart misgave her, and she thought she would make one more effort to stop them. Then she sprang up with unusual alacrity, and pushed past nurse, who was standing at the door with her youngest sister in her arms.

“Take care, Miss Edith ; you are enough to knock me and the child down.”

Edith opened the little garden gate, looked down the street, saw her brothers were already out of hearing, and, saying to herself, “They must do what they like,” she returned to the sitting-room.

"Where are the boys gone in such a hurry?" Miss Wilford asked.

Edith did not answer, and Ida said, "To the beach, I think, Aunt Louie," and that was all.

Several times in the course of the evening Edith found herself looking out at the little black specks, which she knew to be fishing-boats, and wondering in which of them Stephen and Hugh were fishing.

It came on to rain about eight o'clock, and the wind which had been silent all day began to howl and moan against the window.

"We shall have no summer this year," Ida said, "it *can't* keep fair even for one whole day; it is so provoking. Here, Meta, pray come and look at my knitting, there is a great hole in it."

"Why, you have dropped a stitch all the way down," Meta said, laughing; "but I can mend it—can't I, auntie?"

"What do you mean by mend? it is not broken," said Ida.

"German idiom, most likely," Edith said, satirically.

She was sitting by the window, wishing the boys would come, and watching the gathering twilight and a fog creeping over the sea with a jealous uneasiness.

"How dark it is this evening; it is not nine o'clock," Miss Wilford said, "and I cannot see to work, but supper will be ready directly, and it is not worth having candles here."

The younger children were all gone to bed, and only Edith and Ida and Meta were left with their aunt. Nine o'clock struck; the rattle of plates and knives was heard in the next room, and presently, Hester the housemaid came to say supper was on the table.

"Where can the boys be," Aunt Louie said, "this wet, dark evening? I wonder they have not come in."

"Just look, auntie, at the fog," said Ida, "why, ten minutes ago, I could see the sea, and now I can't even see the garden wall."

The mist had indeed become dense, and everything was hidden. Time went on, Meta and Ida went to bed, and Edith and

Aunt Louie were left in the drawing-room alone. Edith bent over her book, but though she turned over the leaves, she could not read. Ten o'clock struck, and then nurse appeared.

"The young gentlemen ought to be in, ma'am," she said, addressing Miss Wilford. "Where can they be? When they do come, they ought to be well punished—that they ought," said nurse. "The sea-fog is so thick, one can't see an inch before one, and it wets one through in no time. Master Hugh is certain to be ill."

Hitherto Miss Wilford had not spoken to Edith; now she said,—

"Edith, do you know where your brothers are?"

Aunt Louie's voice was grave and sad, and Edith could not maintain silence any longer.

"I am afraid the boys are out in a boat, Aunt Louie. I know they were talking to a fisherman this morning about catching rock whiting with a line, and I think they said they were going out this evening."

"And you knew that, Miss Edith," said nurse, "and never tried to stop them?—that is just like you. It was too much trouble, I suppose."

Edith's face grew crimson, and she only murmured,—

"They never care for a word I say to them—they are only rude to me if I speak to them."

"Perhaps they will be here soon," Aunt Louie said gently. "I trust they will, for I am getting anxious."

Nurse departed, and took up her position at the front door, while she sent the landlady's son down the village to inquire if the boats were come in. He returned in ten minutes with the information that two boats were still out—Cowd's and Browne's. One had come in, but when the fog had swept up so suddenly, it had had great difficulty in landing, and had made for the rocks by the mouth of the little river Leigh, and had very nearly been stranded there. The coast-guardsmen were on the beach, and several



fishermen, and they expected the two other boats every minute.

"I shall go down to the beach," said nurse, "for I can't rest; it is getting on to eleven, and I am certain something has happened."

Edith heard nurse get her bonnet and shawl, and then, without a word, she flew upstairs, put on her waterproof cloak and hat, and followed her. It was difficult to find the way, and when she got to the shore, there was no sound but the moaning of the waves on the pebbles, and she stumbled over the rough stones uncertain and bewildered. Presently she ran against a boat, and the next minute she heard voices, and saw a lurid speck of light near her, which came from the lanthorn of a coast-guardsmen.

"Cowd's is a ricketty old boat," Edith heard the man say. "Browne's is worth two of it, and Browne is a deal sharper than Cowd, who is as like as not to drift out beyond Lynn Point, and get upon the rocks."

Just as the man spoke, there was a cry,—

"Here's a boat, a-hoy!"

Then a scuffling of feet over the shingle, and shouts answered from the sea,—

"All right, a-hoy!—it's Browne's boat.

Edith pressed eagerly forward, and knocked against nurse.

"Are they here?—are the boys here?—Stephen and Hugh."

"No; there's nobody here but Browne's own boys," said the coast-guardsman, "a pretty night it is to be out; but the fog will clear when the moon rises."

"Old Cowd is a foggy party," said another fisherman, "we mustn't look for him yet."

"Oh, do you think there is any danger?" Edith asked, "do you think ——?"

The gentle, refined voice caused a silence.

"Who is that?" one man inquired.

"It is Miss Freemantle," said nurse; "we are afraid our young gentlemen are out in the other boat. They went out fishing at six o'clock."

"Well, I daresay there will be a clearance soon," said the coast-guardsman, encourag-

ingly, "and then old Cowd will be ready to put in. Browne saw him out by the crab pots, and then the fog came up, and, of course, they lost sight of each other. It's about the thickest sea-mist I ever remember; in the summer, that is. You had better take the young lady home; it is no use your waiting here. I'll call and let you know the moment there's any sign of Cowd's boat, if you will tell me where you live."

"Myrtle Cottage, just half way up the street," said nurse. "Come, Miss Edith, dear, come home; you'll get cold standing here."

Edith obeyed almost mechanically, and in another five minutes had flung herself on her knees by the bed where Ida slept peacefully, unconscious of the distress and anxiety around her. Edith Freemantle never forgot that night,—how the slow hours dragged on, and the dawn crept over the murky sea—the early summer dawn—which seemed to bring no comfort with it, for no boys came home.

Aunt Louie had gone gently into the room

soon after Edith had come home with nurse, and had laid her hand upon the bowed head.

"I know so exactly what you feel, Edith; you must pray and trust."

"You can't know," said Edith, impatiently; "I am so wretched, so miserable."

"Edith, dear child, one day I will tell you why it is I can feel with you, as I do to-night. Lie down by Ida if you can, and try to keep quiet."

"No, no; I can't. Oh, Aunt Louie, I had rather be alone, please."

Miss Wilford paused a moment, then said, earnestly, "God comfort and help you, my poor child;" and once more she left her to go down and keep the weary watch which nurse shared; and poor, restless nurse also made many fruitless journeys to the beach, and returned each time more dispirited than ever. At eight o'clock the sun began to disperse the mist, and lines of light danced upon the sea. All was life and motion once more; the heavy depressing fog rolled away, the larks sprang up from the moors and fields

with their rejoicing song, dew-drops sparkled in a thousand tiny globes upon the purple heather-bells and plummy ferns, bees hummed, and white sea-gulls, with wings like burnished silver, sailed over the cliffs, as Edith Freemantle, with a pale, wan face, came up from the shore with Miss Wilford, and stopping at the door of the Post-Office, saw her take a telegram from the counter, and write these words—

“MISS WILFORD,

“Myrtle Cottage,

“Leigh Sudbury,

“To STEPHEN FREEMANTLE, Esq.,

“Torchester.

“We are very anxious about the two elder boys. Will you come at once?”

## CHAPTER IV.

## SAFE HOME.

THE first coach brought Mr. Freemantle from Torchester; and his stern, anxious face, as he walked into the sitting-room, where the children were gathered, seemed to demand an answer to the question which his lips could scarcely frame.

“What is it?”

Edith sat with her head bowed upon her hands, and could not answer. It was Ida who said in a low, frightened voice—

“Stephen and Hugh went out in a boat last night, papa, and have never come back.”

“Went out in a boat alone?”

“No, with a fisherman; an old fisherman, papa.”

"Who gave them leave to go? where is your aunt, Edith? why don't you speak? where is your aunt? and where is nurse?"

"They are gone down to the coastguard station again, to see if anything can be done about sending out another boat."

This time it was little Meta who answered.

"Did the boys go without the knowledge of any one?" Mr. Freemantle asked. "I say, did no one of you know they were going to do what I had expressly forbidden?"

Then at last Edith spoke. She raised a white face to her father's, and her trembling lips just articulated—

"I knew they were going, father."

"You, Edith; and you made no remonstrance, made no effort to prevent them! What an elder sister you have been to them throughout! You, who ought to have stood in their mother's place more than any one!"

And Mr. Freemantle strode out of the house down the little quiet street, where the eyes of many followed him, for all Leigh Sudbury knew by this time that old Cowd's boat was

missing, and that two sons of the gentleman at Myrtle Cottage were in her, when she put off from the beach the night before. Great sympathy was felt for him; and there was not a fisherman or sailor in the place that would not gladly have helped him if they could.

Edith never knew how long she sat, as her father left her with those harsh words, which she felt were not wholly undeserved, sounding in her ears. The other children ran in and out of the room, but she did not stir. Pictures more vivid than any she had ever looked at, passed before her mind's eye,—of her fair-haired joyous brothers drowning in the dark murky night, and lying now cold and dead in the depths of the summer sea. In vain one voice within pleaded, "If they were disobedient it was not my fault; they knew they were wrong; I told them so, and they would not listen." The other sterner and more truthful voice would be heard—"You never tried to influence the boys for good, you never tried to win them by love, you



loved your own ease and your own comfort better than you loved them, and now it is too late. Oh, was it too late? would it be too late? would she never see them again? hear their loud ringing laugh, their boisterous mirth?" God was very merciful to Edith Freemantle,—it was not too late.

News was brought into Leigh Sudbury by a coast-guardsman about mid-day that one of the boats had got round the point in the fog, that the old boatman, having missed his way, had become confused, and had drifted into Sidmouth early that morning. The young gentlemen, the man said, were safe, but drenched to the skin, and frightened; and no wonder, for the boat was leaky, and got an awkward scrape against a rock in Laderam Bay, and they did nothing but take turns to bale out the water for two or three hours, and when they got on shore at Sidmouth they were so tired and worn out that they had been taken to an Inn close to the sea and put to bed while their wet clothes were dried.

Mr. Freemantle ordered a carriage, and set off immediately for Sidmouth, and Louie and nurse returned to the cottage to tell the children the good news, and thus the great load of anxiety, and fear, and terror was lifted from their hearts, and never was thanksgiving more fervent than that which then ascended to God from hearts which were overflowing with gratitude.

Edith, who had kept watch all night, and had been more oppressed with anxiety than any of the others, was taken upstairs by Aunt Louie, who laid her gently and tenderly upon her bed, drew the blind down, and begged her to sleep. But Edith was so overwrought and exhausted, that she entreated Aunt Louie not to leave her, but to lie down by her side, and let her tell her all. What the "all" was I need not write here. This child's life had not been unlike that of many others I know. Nor do I think that all at once, or by miraculous power, the habits of fifteen years will alter. But those who knew Edith Freemantle can testify that from that

day there was a change, imperceptible at first, but sure. God had spoken, and she had heard His voice; and Aunt Louie had helped her onwards while she remained with her, and by that most powerful of all engines, sympathy, the sympathy of experience, won her niece to a loving confidence, which was helpful in itself.

On that memorable afternoon, when Stephen and Hugh had returned, and Edith had received them with a welcome so tender and so loving that they could scarcely believe it was hers, when her father had given them his forgiveness for the act of disobedience, and Edith had been assured again and again of his love and future trust in her, Aunt Louie sat down, when the house was quiet, and all the children asleep peacefully in their beds, to write a story of her own early days, which she left in Edith's hands when she returned to Germany, after two months spent with her nieces and nephews partly in Torchester and partly at Leigh Sudbury.

As this story of long ago touched many

an answering chord in Edith's heart, I trust it will also find an echo in those who shall read it here. I leave it to my young readers in that hope, and commend it to them with many an earnest prayer that they may learn in the spring-time of youth, and the early freshness of their childhood's days, to think of God first in everything, and of those who are bound to them by the nearest and dearest ties of kindred, for His sake—for there is nothing so sweet on earth as the unselfish continuous showing forth of love!—love which has its root struck deep, where change and decay cannot come, and which shall last through the countless ages of eternity, when the former things have passed away, and God is all and in all.



**YESTERDAY;**  
**OR,**  
**AUNT LOUIE'S STORY.**



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# YESTERDAY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### HOW THE HOLIDAYS BEGAN.

THESE holidays of which I write are separated from me by a long lapse of years. These holidays stand out in strong colours as I look back upon my life; and what I did in them, and where and how I passed them, is what I am going to tell you here. Perhaps what I did, in the first place, and what I left undone, in the second, may interest and amuse some young readers,—do more, I would fain hope,—rouse their energies, kindle their desires for high aims and lofty enterprise, and warn them

against apathy and indifference, or what I would call self-sparing and self-pleasing.

But I will not preach or get prosy ; if I do, I well know that the bright blue, or dark hazel eyes bending over this page will glance down it and skip, till they light upon a bit of the story, and rosy lips will give utterance to words anything but complimentary, and which might hurt my feelings could I hear them ! So I must take care what I am about, for I do really wish to win my way with you, my children, whose holidays, unlike mine, only ended yesterday, and are not rolled back into the far past.

Myra and I came home from school on the 18th of December. We had a short journey of scarcely twenty miles, which we performed in the coach from Etherington to Pressborough, the small country town where our father practised as a surgeon, and was called by courtesy, not by right, Dr. Wilford. Myra and I were the eldest children of a large family, of which all were boys but ourselves and the baby. "The last note of the octave"

my father called her, when he wrote to us in September to announce her arrival. "If the last, the sweetest and best," our mother had added in the faint lines which she had pencilled on the other side of my father's large blue sheet, when he sent us our second bulletin to assure us that all was well with our mother and the baby.

And now, as Myra and I ran up the steep street of Pressborough from the coach-office, with our three eldest brothers, we felt all the anxiety natural to our age to see the new baby. Rupert, Charlie, and Jem, were always a little shy with us, and we with them, when we first met after separation. It is wonderful how soon this restraint induced by absence wears off, and how soon brothers and sisters take up the thread again quite naturally at the very place where they have dropped it! Our house stood on the brow of the hill, up which Pressborough struggled. It was a little back from the street, with iron palings and a paved court before it: a straight stiff house, with a brass plate on the door, bearing

my father's name, and two bells with brass handles, one of which was lettered, "Night Bell." It was not in the least like Christmas-tide outwardly; there was no snow and no frost, no bright clear sky, and no fresh inspiring air. The afternoon was damp, and dark, and close; the streets very wet and dirty, and the whole aspect of things anything but cheerful. But as the iron gate clinked behind us, and we ran up to the door, it mattered little to us what sort of temperature was prevailing. The door was the door of Home, and we had no need to pull either of the little brass nobs, for we were looked for and expected.

The door opened before we reached it; and there stood our mother, little Cecil clinging to her dress, Ralph half shy half exultant standing in front, and the baby-sister—that new and long-desired possession—in her arms.

"My dear Myra! my dear Louie!" were my mother's words, as we kissed her, and the little soft baby she held—almost too rapidly.

"Take care, darlings, take care," my mother said, "Baby is but a tiny creature yet. Papa is sorry he could not come to Etherington for you, but he is so busy—busier than ever. I knew Rupert would see that your luggage was all right. Where is it, Rupert?"

"Coming up on a truck from the office, mother," was the reply. "Hallo, Miss Lou, that's a grand thing you have got on your head; it is like a cabbage net made with caterpillars."

I blushed at this disrespectful allusion to the chenille net in which I had been persuaded by one of my school-fellows to gather my hair. I thought it very grand and very pretty, and had expended the last shilling of my half-year's pocket-money upon what was then a novelty.

We were all in the dining-room by this time, and there was a gradually-increasing chorus of voices, to which our little three-months-old baby lent its treble accompaniment. My mother sat down in the old



leather chair by the fire, with the baby on her knees; and I might have seen, if I had looked, that she was very pale, and seemed very tired and weary. Our old nurse saw it, I think; for, when she came into the room to give us her welcome, she turned sharply upon Cecil, who was climbing up the back of mamma's chair.

"Come down, this minute, Master Cecil! Don't you see how fagged your mamma is?"

Then, as we all went upstairs, nurse—bearing off the baby in triumph—went on:—

"Your mamma is not at all strong, or like herself; she has too much on her shoulders, and she will break down, see if she doesn't! Dear me! Miss Louie, how you are grown—quite fit to leave school and come and help at home! You must be teaching the little ones soon, and saving your mamma in that way. No! I won't have you boys in your sister's room, so neat and nice as it is. Come, be off!"

Whether nurse's bidding would have been so instantaneously obeyed under other cir-

cumstances I cannot say ; as it was, Charlie shouted from below that "the girls' luggage was come," and Rupert and Jem clattered down stairs to struggle up again with our two boxes and the carpet bag—in which was gathered a motley collection of boots and shoes, and other possessions, which had been hastily thrust into it at the last moment. The governess at school, who attended to the wardrobes and packing, could only hold herself answerable for the trunks, and the carpet bags were left to the discretion of their owners.

"Now," said nurse, "if you will hold baby, I shall have time to do some of your unpacking before tea."

But as she spoke, my mother came into the room ; her face was distressed and anxious. It often was—only no one saw or heeded.

"Rupert and Charlie have broken the window on the staircase," she said, "in getting up your boxes. I am afraid your father will be very much vexed. You should have waited till Thomas came in, my dear boys."

My brothers, who were red in the face with their efforts, were now entering with the second box, and little Jem, having pressed Ralph into the service, had got the carpet bag upstairs also. Of course, I was old enough to look after all this; to prevent the boys' kindly but injudicious efforts; to unpack my own and Myra's trunks; to do everything for myself. But I was "not too fond of trouble," as nurse expressed it. I was active and energetic enough when my own pleasure was concerned, but I never exerted myself for the sake of others.

Thus I began the holidays by holding baby till she cried, when I ran off to the nursery with her, and gave her to Susie, the nursemaid, who was not much older than I was. Then, when nurse heard baby cry, and went to the rescue, I came back to my room, turned over all my possessions to get at a prize I had won at school, which was at the bottom of the box, threw my hat and cloak on the bed, kicked off my heavy boots in separate corners, left Myra seated on the foot

of our bed reading a story which had been lent her by a schoolfellow, and never made the slightest effort to be useful myself, or urge her to be useful either.

“Useful!” I hear some one say. “What are holidays for, if we are not to enjoy ourselves—if we may not do as we like?” Well, if little people ask this question about holidays, big people are apt to ask the same question about life, and both are equally at fault.

Living for others, and not for self, is the great secret we are all so slow to learn. Ah! how it changes the colour of every day when through it has run a thread ever so small—ever so feeble, which shines with the bright shinings of the heavenly light—straight from the glory of Him of whom it is written, “He pleased not Himself.”

The sound of our father’s voice in the hall took Myra from her book, and me from the forage I was making in my box. We flew down to greet him; and no daughters were ever more heartily kissed and welcomed than

were we by our big stalwart father. Rupert and Charlie hung back, oppressed by the weight of the broken window, but Ralph and Cecil pattered down behind us, and began to shout their news.

"Louie has brought home a prize. Myra did not get one. Papa, Charlie's been and broke ——"

"Broken what?" my father interposed. "Now, really, if those boys have been up to mischief again to-day, Elizabeth,"—and the doctor strode into the dining-room, preparing to call my mother to account for her sons' delinquencies.

Meanwhile there were whispers to Ralph of "Tell-tale, stupid little thing," and so forth; when mamma gently said, "The two elder boys were trying to be useful by taking up their sisters' luggage. One of them pushed his elbow through the window on the staircase, that is all."

"All!" said my father. "I wish there were any chance of its being *all*. Come, boys, don't hang back in that way," as the

figures of Rupert and Charlie were seen at the door. "As it is the first night of the holidays, I suppose I must not be hard on you; but, understand me, boys, the next window you break, or the next mischief you do, you must pay for, out of your half-year's allowance. Now, I have had a long drive, and I am hungry and want my tea—something substantial, Elizabeth—for I missed my dinner. I have been at Lee Manor all day."

"How is Mrs. Lee?" my mother asked. She seldom ventured to inquire for patients; my father would not answer if she did; but this time she repeated boldly, "How is Mrs. Lee, Bertram?"

"She will pull through now," was the reply; and then it was evident that my father did not wish for any further questions. He turned to go across the hall to his surgery—for in those days country doctors dispensed their own medicines—merely saying,—

"Well, Lou and Myra, what do you think of the new sister? She is not like either of you—quite a new edition of Wilford beauty.

Dear, dear, how the wind cuts in through this broken window ! Tell your mother it must be mended at once !”

And these were the last words, as the surgery door closed.

“What is the matter with Mrs. Lee, mamma ?” I pursued, when I returned to my mother ; “I am afraid there will be no parties at Lee Manor, this Christmas, if Mrs. Lee is ill.”

“Parties !” repeated my mother, “no, indeed, there will be no party at the Manor ; Mrs. Lee has been lying between life and death for the last ten days : your father has been there constantly. Willie brought the fever home from school, at Michaelmas, and it has been lurking about in the Manor ever since.”

“Is it scarlet fever ?” I asked.

My mother answered,—

“Yes, and Mrs Lee has had it since her baby was born, three weeks ago. But come, let us go to the nursery and see our baby ; we have not half admired her, you and I, dear

Louie. Another evening we will keep up a fire in the drawing-room, as I shall want to hear all your new pieces on the piano."

My mother put her arm round me, and we went to the nursery together. We found Myra there already, sitting in the old rocking-chair, with baby in her arms. The nursemaid was getting the children's tea ready, and Cecil and Ralph were playing nine-pins on the floor.

"Oh! take care, Myra darling," my mother said. "Where is nurse?" she added, as she took baby gently from Myra.

"If you please, ma'am, nurse is trying to put Miss Louie's room neat; it was in such a state!"

"Oh, yes, I remember," I said; "I turned out my box to get my prize. But, mother, what a sweet baby!" and I kneeled down before the chair where my mother swayed gently to and fro with baby in her arms.

The fire-light flickered on the ceiling, glanced on my little brother's golden curls, played upon the long white robes of my baby



sister, and made phantoms grim and tall upon the pictured walls. Now and then it revealed to me my mother's face.

Why does it all come back so clearly to me as I write? Why do I seem to see it all before me now, with a vivid force, which is pain? Could I but go back to that first night of my holidays! Could I but hear that gentle voice again—touch her hand, feel her fingers in my hair! But it is not given us to go back. Young and glad and happy hearts, remember that! What you do in your holidays is done for ever—past all recal. What you leave undone can never, never be repaired.

## CHAPTER II.

## A ROUND WITH THE DOCTOR.

THE next morning was wet—just as hopelessly wet as several of its predecessors—and our house seemed very full of children; and there was a great deal of noise and chatter. The time did not hang heavily, however; it was the first day; and we children had a great deal to tell each other, and a good many speculations to make as to what we should do—how many parties we should be asked to—whether we should have one at home—and so forth.

Children had their parties in those days, as they have them now; but they were far less formal, and not so much like assemblies

of little men and women as they are at the present time. Nevertheless, the idea of a party was always an exciting one, and we eagerly looked out for notes which might come from the Vicarage, or the Hunts, or the Palmers, above all, from the Lees, of Lee Manor. This year we knew no such invitation would come from the Lees. Lee Manor had, as our mother told me, been under a dark cloud of illness and sorrow. So we dismissed the idea of a repetition of last year's festivities at the Manor with reluctant certainty. Rupert pronounced it a "bore" for Henry and Edward Lee. "They can't come home for the holidays, and have got to poke at their old aunt's at Folkestone!"

"I wonder if I shall see Margaret Lee," I said, when the subject was under discussion.

Myra promptly replied,—

"Certainly not; she has been ill with the fever, and of course we must not speak to her."

"Of course I shall be guided by papa, and not by you, Myra," was my retort. "You

always give an opinion, whether it is asked for or not."

This conversation took place in a large attic, which was given up to the boys as a play-room, and where they had a variety of performances—acting charades, puppet shows, and so on. An old clock-case had just been discovered and seized upon by Rupert and Charlie, to be converted into a Punch and Judy box. We had been examining the old dolls, which I had promised to dress appropriately; and Ralph had given up a frizzy dog, which was to personate Toby. I had made several expeditions to my room to forage for material to dress the dolls, when, on the third, I heard my mother's voice:—

"Louie, is that you? I am going to sit quietly in the drawing-room; bring your work and come too. Where are you?"

And then my mother came into my room.

"My dear child, how untidy all this room looks that I saw so neatly prepared for you yesterday. Indeed, Louie, I cannot allow

you to throw your things about in this way."

"These gloves are Myra's," I said; "those are her books and papers; she is always either scribbling stories or reading them. At this moment she is sitting cross-legged on an old chest in the play-room, deep in some stupid book."

"I did not ask you what Myra was doing," my mother said, gently (ah! she was always gentle). "Those drawers left half open are yours, and so is this shoe, which seems to have lost its companion. Now, put everything in order here, and then come down."

"I should have thought Susie might attend to our room; what is she for?"

"She has a great deal to do in the nursery now," my mother said, "and nurse's hands are very full. A girl of your age ought to help others—certainly save them unnecessary trouble."

While my mother was speaking I had been shutting the drawers with no very gentle hand, pushing Myra's books and papers into

a cupboard, and looking for the lost slipper.

"I am going to dress some dolls for the boys," I said. "They are making a Punch and Judy show upstairs; I must go back for a few minutes, and then I will come into the drawing-room."

The few minutes extended to half-an-hour, and when at last I went to join my mother, I found little Cecil had appeared for his afternoon visit, and baby followed us into the room in nurse's arms.

"If you please, ma'am," she began, "will you speak to Miss Louie and to the young gentlemen about turning out every place as they do for that attic; Master Rupert has been at the top drawer in the linen press, and got out some curtains; it will take me full half-an-hour to put things to rights; and I must say, Miss Louie, I think you ought to know better than to encourage your brothers as you do—at your age, too!"

"At my age!" I replied; "how tired and sick I am of hearing about my age! I wish

I was fourteen months instead of fourteen years old."

"Nurse is quite right, Louie," said my mother; "you ought to be, as I said just now, a help, and not a hindrance."

"I think it is very hard," I said, tears springing to my eyes, "that when I come home I should be expected to be under nurse, and wait upon every one; not half so much is expected of Myra."

"Louie!" said my mother, reprovingly.

But my father's entrance stopped the conversation. He took Cecil in his arms, and set him on his shoulder, asked what mischief had been done all this wet day, and finally rummaged in his pocket for a note, which he handed to my mother, saying,—

"It is from the Palmers. I was there to-day, and I think it is an invitation for the children."

Immediately I was all life and spirit again.

"Yes," said my mother, reading the note, "yes; for the 6th of January; a long invitation. This is only the 19th of December."

"Oh! the Palmers are sure to be fashionable; lawyers always are. Where now, Louie?"

"I am going to tell the boys," I replied, darting off.

"Wait a minute, Louie," my father called, "How do you know your mother and I will allow you to accept the invitation?"

I laughed, for I saw my father's eyes twinkle.

"Of course you will let us go, papa," I said. "There are not so many parties here that we can afford to lose one."

"That is spoken like a little woman," my father answered, letting Cecil stoop from his height to clutch at my hair: for Cecil was the "old baby," and privileged.

"I hope," continued my father, "that my little woman, the eldest of eight children, will try to be a sensible and useful one, save her mother trouble, make the holidays a rest to her, who needs it so much, and not let her head run altogether wild on parties."



"Useful" again, I thought. "I wish I were not the eldest. My father, too, so seldom lectured! What had made him take up the same strain?" I struggled from under Cecil's grasp, and, without a word, scampered off to the play-room, announcing the contents of the Palmers' note in a triumphant voice.

"They will have a Christmas tree," said Charlie; "they always ape the Manor, and the Lees had a tree last year."

"I hope they will have charades," said Myra, tucking her book under her arm, and stretching.

After we had discussed the party in all its bearings, I turned upon Myra:—

"You must go into our room, Myra, and put your things away. Mamma is very angry with me for leaving it in a mess; but it is not fair I should have all the blame, so please not to be so lazy; and go and put those sheets of paper straight which you left strewn about, and which I have stuffed into a cupboard."

I did not speak pleasantly, but Myra did

not retaliate; she seldom did. She only exclaimed in distress,—

“ Oh! Louie; that is my translation of the French story I was going to read to mamma.”

Myra vanished to look after her property, while I said crossly,—

“ You should not have left it lying about, if you cared for it. You are so lazy.”

Looking back in life, we see what our own faults were so much more clearly than we see other people's. It was not so when we were actors in the scenes which we now look at through the haze of years. Then too often we thought ourselves right, and others wrong; the blame seemed to us to lie upon our shoulders unfairly, and we tried to shift it elsewhere. So, now, I very much doubt if Myra were as indolent and dreamy as I then thought. I doubt very much if I, with my greater spirit and energy, really effected more than she did. I was selfish, as so many of us are, more in what I left undone than in what I did.

At last the relentless rain ceased; the

weather gradually cleared up, and Christmas Day was fine and frosty. Long walks with the boys were feasible, and there was nothing I enjoyed more. Coming out of church on the Sunday evening after Christmas, my hand linked in my father's arm, I remember one of those pleasant thrills of happiness which the sense of home, and our father's and mother's ever present love, gives us in our youth. It was when my father gave my hand a little friendly pinch, saying,—

“The doctor's little Lou will soon be as tall as he is.”

“No,” I said, pressing closer; “I am not going to reach six feet two inches, please, papa. Now the weather is fine, will you take me a country round? I do so like them. You always do, you know, once or twice in the holidays.”

“Very well; but isn't it too cold, Lou? I have a good long drive before me to-morrow. Let me see. I must start at nine. I need not go to Lee Manor till the afternoon: so you may come, if you like.”

"When may we go to Lee Manor? I am so sorry I can't see Margaret."

"You must not see her at all during these holidays—mind that! You must live without the Lees, and I am not sure that it is bad for you. You were there too much at Midsummer."

"Papa, I thought you liked the Lees?"

"So I do; they are very good friends and patients of mine; but my little girls will have to tread a very different path in life to the Miss Lees, and it is better for them not to see too much of luxuries, of which, in all probability, they will never have a taste. Here we are at home. Now we will have a cosy supper, and finish up with some hymns. You begin to play very well, Louie. By-the-bye, you must remember not to speak to any of the household from the Manor if you meet them in your walks, and do not talk about them before your mother. She is nervous about this scarlet fever; and though, thank God, I have never brought any infection to the house, your mother is not very strong,

and this makes her more nervous than usual. I tell her that doctors and clergymen have a charmed life."

These expeditions with my father were always a great delight, and I set off in high spirits the next morning, mounted at my father's side, my feet comfortably ensconced in a foot-rug and well covered with wraps. It was a lovely winter's day, the sky blue and bright, and the frost sparkling on the hedges and trees, as the sun kissed the wreaths of ice-pearls and changed them into tears.

After a mile or two, our road lay across an open common, over which the bay horse trotted briskly, his feet making a pleasant sound on the hard road. Presto turned off at the edge of the common towards the gate leading to a farm house. The good horse knew his master's patients, or, at any rate, where they lived, as well as the doctor himself. For several years now had Presto stopped twice or three times a week at Heath Farm. There, in a room on the ground-floor, with a wide latticed window looking out upon the

garden, Farmer Browne's only daughter had been lying hopelessly ill for many months. In the Midsummer holidays I had stopped at the gate of Heath Farm with my father, and he had come out from a long visit, saying, "It will not be many days now." And yet here we were in the last week of the year. The lime-trees where the bees had hummed that hot day were leafless, the garden border flowerless and desolate, and the clematis and roses that climbed over the quaint old house naked and bare; but Lucy Browne still lived.

"Papa, I thought you said, last time I was here, Lucy Browne had not many days to live?"

I said this as Presto was pulled up short, and I caught sight, over the hedge, of the wide window, and could see the head of the sofa-bed where I knew the sick girl was lying.

My father smiled.

"Doctors are sometimes wrong, Louie. I thought Lucy could not have lived through the great heat; and now I think the same about the cold. I may be wrong again."

By this time a farm boy had come round from the back premises, hearing the sound of wheels. He touched his hat or rather his forehead, as my father greeted him in his usual pleasant manner.

"Will the young lady like to get down, sir?" the boy asked in his broad dialect.

"No, thank you," I answered. "You will not be very long, papa?"

"I can't say," my father replied, routing under the seat for a parcel.

"I think you had better get down, Louie: you will catch cold sitting there."

But I was bent on retaining my exalted position. I had a shy dread of Mrs. Browne's pouncing upon me, if I dismounted, and asking me to come in and see poor Lucy, and have a glass of hot elder wine and a gingerbread. The latter would have been very acceptable, but I had a nervous shrinking, common to girls of my age, from the sight of sick people. Once I had seen Lucy Browne, and the ghastly spectacle haunted me for days; besides, I had felt very hot and confused

and uneasy, and did not know in the least what to say, when Mrs. Browne turned up Lucy's sleeve and showed me her emaciated arm.

The gate swung back behind my father, and I saw Mrs. Browne's comely figure at the door as she opened it to him. But she closed it again, and I was left to my own meditation.

Presto knew how to stand. Doctors' horses have to learn the lesson of patience. He gave each of his feet a stamp in turn just to warm them, and tossed his head with a little proud defiance when the boy in charge stroked his nose, as much as to say by this nod, that he knew his own business, and did not want any one to hold the rein to keep him till the doctor returned. Whatever Presto thought, I began to find the time long. I had watched the old sheep-dog's sedate patrol in and out from the farm-yard till I was tired. I had looked up, through the trees skirting the farm, into the blue sky, till I could have drawn the tracery the branches made upon a sheet of paper. I had marvelled at the appetites of

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three or four ducks that were waddling about on the edge of a pond, under the wall of the farm-yard, and I began to feel cold. At this point a little maid-servant with rosy cheeks came running down the garden path. She held her cap on her head with one hand, and in the other a scrap of paper.

"That's from the doctor," she said, as she handed me the note, standing on tip-toe to reach my elevation.

There were a few pencil words in my father's large characters :—

"I may be here another half hour or more. Get down and walk about, or come into the house and sit down."

"Tell Papa I will walk about," I said to the little maid; and, suiting the action to the word, I let myself down from my pinnacle, and exercised my feet for a minute after Presto's fashion.

"She is very bad, Miss," the little maid volunteered. "We thought she was a-going all night,"—and the girl raised the corner of

her checked apron to her eye. "Will you please to come in, Miss?"

"Oh, no," I said, "thank you. I will walk about till Dr. Wilford is ready. Tell him so, please;" and I set off full speed down a lane behind Heath Farm, with no idea as to where I was going, but only anxious to get away from the possibility of entering the farmhouse.

It was, as I have told you, a beautiful winter's day. As I walked fast down the lane the fresh air seemed to invigorate me. I put away from me the thought of illness and death, which, as I sat in the gig by the farm, would haunt me. And I sang snatches of songs, and felt that life—strong, full, vigorous life like mine—was sweet!

The lane led down to a small hamlet, inhabited chiefly by the labourers employed by Mr. Browne and another large farmer in the neighbourhood. As I passed a turn leading to the main road again, a pony-carriage came swiftly round the corner. I had barely

time to save myself, by getting close to the hedge, as a familiar voice called out—

“Take care! Why, it’s Louie Wilford! You dear old Lou, what are you about here alone in Millcup Lane?”

The pony-carriage pulled up short, and Margaret Lee sprang out, and we exchanged an embrace.

“Margaret, how glad I am to see you,” I said, recalled only to the remembrance of my promise to my father by the voice of Margaret’s governess, who was holding the reins of the pony-carriage :—

“Margaret, my dear, ought you to be talking to Miss Wilford? We are all in quarantine, you know.”

I drew back, but Margaret turned a contemptuous glance on poor Miss Tinlay.

“What nonsense!” she said, “as if I could give any one the scarlet fever—in the open air, too! Walk on with me, Louie. Miss Tinlay can drive Taffy slowly along the lane; we can turn out again into the Pressborough road, past Heath Farm. I have such lots of

things I want to tell you ; and it is so dull at home, the boys away, and only the little ones—who have been so cross since they were ill.”

“Yes,” I replied, “I am so sorry you have been ill, and Mrs. Lee, too ; but, indeed, Margaret, I am afraid I ought not to walk with you. My father ——”

“Oh, if you are a coward, pray don’t come near me!” said Margaret, in a provoking voice. “It is all very well for old maids like Miss Tinlay to be nervous. I should have thought better of you. And I can tell you, every one is not so silly. Lady Florence Scott came to see us yesterday, and she is a very great friend of mine.”

All this was very irritating to my self-love. I did not like to be called a coward, and as nervous as an old maid, by Margaret. Still less did I like to hear her say that Lady Florence Scott was taking my place at Lee Manor as Margaret’s friend ; and showing her friendship, too, by braving the dangers of scarlet fever, while I was unwilling to be near her, even in the open air !

"Oh," I said, weakly yielding to the pressure of the moment, "I am not afraid for myself, but ——"

"No, I know you are not so stupid," said Margaret, putting her arm through mine again.

And then she began her chatter (I wonder I cared for it), till the gable roofs of Heath Farm came in sight again, when she bid me a hearty good-bye, and seated herself by Miss Tinlay's side, took the reins from her hand, and touching Taffy smartly with the whip, the carriage was quickly out of sight, leaving me standing in the lane alone.

All my spirits were gone; I felt very uncomfortable; and I reasoned with myself for some time about what I had done. There was no harm; how could I help it? If Margaret would dash out of the carriage it was not my fault. It was clearly she who was to blame, and not me. I was conscious, as I said this to myself, that there was another side to the question; that I might have steadily and bravely seconded Miss Tinlay's

entreaties to Margaret ; that I ought to have done so, and avoided that close proximity to Margaret which walking with her arm in mine for ten minutes made necessary. Then followed another long reasoning, as to whether I should tell my father that I had seen Margaret. As I stood by the gate of the Farm again, where Presto was still patiently waiting, I could see the Lees' pony-carriage swiftly rolling over the common. I watched it till it disappeared ; and then, with a sigh, decided that I would not tell my father just then. No harm *could* come of speaking to Margaret in the open air !

## CHAPTER III.

## LUCY.

AT last my father came out of the farm, saying,—

“I have kept you a long time, Louie.”

Then he took the reins from the boy's hands, and, after seeing that I was comfortably tucked in, mounted to his seat by my side, and Presto trotted off.

“Well, Louie, it is over now; the poor child is gone.”

“Did she die while you were there, papa?”

“Yes; I saw, when I entered the room, the end was very near, and promised the poor father and mother I would wait.”

“How old was she?” I asked.

“Fifteen; only a year older than you are,

Louie—scarcely a year. Poor child! no wonder she was so ready to go. She was very fretful and irritable when her illness began—three years ago; but latterly she has been patient and gentle; she always greeted me with a smile—she did to-day. Doctors get very fond of their patients sometimes, Louie; and nothing shows real character more than sickness and suffering. How many have I seen led by a rough and painful way to the gates of the City! Man can do so little to soften it, or help the dying; still, thank God, a doctor can do something—at least, can do his best. But, Louie, though I see death so often—day after day, week after week, year after year—I always feel it is a solemn thing to change the visible for the invisible world; I say often when I come away from a death-bed, ‘May I be ready when my turn comes!’”

Then my father was silent for some time. When he spoke again it was quite cheerfully, and we were now entering a small country town five miles from Pressborough, where he



had several patients. I was deposited at the house of an old lady in the High street, and my father left Presto at the "Duke's Arms" to have a feed of corn while he despatched the rest of his business in Oldfield.

I knew from past experience exactly what would happen at Mrs. Barnes's; how she would ask me how old I was; how I liked school; how she would tell me I resembled my father's family; that I had grown a good inch since she saw me before; and, finally, how she would trot out of the room and return with a decanter of ginger cordial and a plate of wonderful biscuits, such as I never tasted elsewhere, crisp and not too sweet, with curled edges, and a *soupçon* of ginger and spice in them. To-day there was a slight variation in the customary proceedings, as Mrs. Barnes had another visitor, who divided her attention with me—a visitor who rehearsed all the little gossip of the place and neighbourhood, and who seemed to have the wonderful knack of knowing everything and every one's concerns.

"Dr. Wilford is in the town to-day," the good lady said at last; and I, who had retreated to the window to watch the passers-by, turned quickly round. "I heard the other day," she continued, "that his wife was very delicate and ailing, poor thing; and I do wonder, with all his large family, he should attend scarlet fever cases as he does: it is so frightfully infectious—carried in clothes and papers. Why, the Lees at the Manor have had the most virulent form of the disease, and——"

Mrs. Barnes's winks and nods and little significant coughs were all lost on her friend, till at last she could contain herself no longer.

"Yes, yes, Miss Pere, and that young lady is the Doctor's little daughter—eldest daughter, I ought to say, and not little now, eh, my dear? Come and speak to Miss Pere."

I advanced unwillingly, and Miss Pere broke forth—

"Why, to be sure, Mrs. Barnes! you

should have introduced me. I am very pleased to see Dr. Wilford's daughter, I'm sure. Papa quite well, my dear?"

I had scarcely time to answer, for my father came in, announcing that Presto was at the door, and that we must make haste home, or we should keep them all waiting for dinner. He thanked Mrs. Barnes for her kindness to me, shook her warmly by the hand, bowed politely to Miss Pere, and then we were soon driving off again towards home.

The sun was as bright and the sky as blue and clear as it had been when we started from Pressborough; but, somehow, I felt none of the fresh pleasure of the early morning. A cloud had come over me—that cloud which always gathers in our horizon when we have done something, however small and apparently trivial, which we wish to hide. It is a very safe test for children to question themselves in any uncertainty, whether they shall like to tell what they have done to their fathers and mothers openly and freely. If there is any doubt here, there is always

doubt about the action itself. Earnestly do I wish to press this upon you, because I remember so well—too well—how I argued with myself during the drive home, and how I decided at last that I had better not tell my father that I had seen and spoken to Margaret Lee.

“It would do no good to alarm my mother,” I said. It was impossible that any harm could arise from what I had done. Some uncomfortable feeling I could not quite get rid of: that an act of disobedience should be confessed: that whether there was harm or not, I ought to confide the circumstances of my walk with Margaret Lee to my father, and leave him to judge as to the desirability of telling my mother or keeping her in ignorance. Little Miss Pere’s conversation with Mrs. Barnes had not tended to reassure me as to the infectious character of scarlet fever, and I registered a profound dislike of Miss Pere in my heart. This at last found expression in words; for, after a long silence during which my father was gravely pondering the

several cases he had visited that day, I suddenly exclaimed,—

“What a horrid little old woman that was at Mrs. Barnes’s to-day. Do you know her, papa?”

“Oh, yes; everybody in Oldfield, or within ten miles of it, knows Miss Pere. Poor little thing! she is only an instance of what women with no sort of occupation come to. Their tongues do too much work, and their brains and hands too little.”

“But they are not all so horrid as Miss Pere, papa, let us hope.”

“Why, Louie, what makes you set your back at Miss Pere in this way?” my father said. “She must have said something to offend you.”

I did not answer, and we soon after reached home.

So my drive ended. It was a long, long time before I had another country round with my father.

## CHAPTER IV.

## PLEASURE AND PAIN.

THE date of the Palmers' party was the 6th of January. It was on the afternoon of the 1st that I was sitting with my mother by the fire with my baby-sister on my knee. We had gone on very much as usual since my drive with my father to Oldfield. There had been some very happy hours, and some that were darkened by the clouds which were too often in the sky of home,—clouds brought there by selfishness and temper and disregard of the wishes and feelings of those around us. I think—nay, I am sure—we brothers and sisters loved each other in no common degree; and not to love such parents

as ours was indeed impossible. But often we had little jars, and discords, and quarrels, which were enough to spoil the pleasantness of our lives for the time, and bring lines of care upon our gentle mother's face. The afternoon before the Palmers' party had been a happy one. I remember it especially. I was in a serene and pleased mood, for all things had gone as I desired, and then it is so easy to be good tempered. Two pretty new white muslin frocks for Myra and me had been finished by the workwoman under my mother's superintendence, and I had just written a number of notes in my school-girlish hand, inviting various juvenile members of the families in the town to a children's party that day week. I had obtained my father's permission that morning at breakfast, and had lost no time in acting upon it. Now my mother and I were having a quiet time by the drawing-room fire, and Winifred was lying in my lap ; her sweet cooing voice waking hosts of tender feelings in my heart. It is wonderful what power babies have to do

this ! how the touch of their soft sweet fingers seems to come with a soothing power, and be to us what nothing else in the world can ever be.

My mother was lying back in her chair watching us, as we sat before the fire, the baby and I.

"It seems but the other day since you were like baby, Louie," she said at last; "it is hard to believe it can be fourteen long years ago."

"I couldn't have been as pretty as baby," I said. "I never had such eyes as hers."

"I thought you perfect," my mother said, half sadly. "Dearest Louie, a first-born child holds a very especial place in her mother's heart. Since I have been so weak and ailing, I have thought a great deal of how it would be if you were left in charge of all these children; for they would naturally look to you, Louie, if I were taken from them."

I looked up from baby's smiles to my mother as she spoke. I could see that she



was putting a great restraint on herself, and that she was on the brink of tears. I could not reply, and she went on,—

“It is as well, dear Louie, to look the possibility of separation steadily in the face, and to talk of it sometimes, you and I.”

“I cannot bear it,” I murmured; “it would break my heart if ——.” I could not finish.

Then my mother rallied, and said a few calm, serious words, gentle, tender, and wise. One thing I especially recall which she said that afternoon: “The only way of peace is the way which Jesus trod. We shall always be bending under burdens too heavy for us, till we take up the cross for His sake, and deny ourselves.”

“Deny ourselves!” How much lies in those words! How very little we concern ourselves, as a rule, about self-denial! If we all, young and old, thought a little more of it, we should find the fireside brightness of our homes so much greater, and it would burn with a far steadier radiance.

I remember I felt as if I would do anything for my mother at that moment, but my resolutions were too often like the early dew of morning, and passed quickly away.

We were all dressed and ready to set off the next afternoon by half-past five o'clock. We kept early hours in Pressborough, and six o'clock was thought a very fashionable hour for a children's party. Rupert, Charlie, and Jem, with myself and Myra, made quite a formidable array. Our mother had collected us in the dining-room, and was giving us all sundry little finishing touches, smoothing Jem's curly hair, adjusting Charlie's tie, and urging Myra and me to be careful how we walked, as the street was muddy by the crossing to Mr. Palmer's house. We *walked* to our parties; and it never entered our heads that it was more dignified to have a carriage or a fly; and we knew it was not worth while to put Presto into the gig for such a short distance.

"I wish your father could see you all,"

my mother said, as the little ones clustered round us, and nurse stood ready to wrap us up in cloaks and shawls.

"I wish I was going," said little Ralph.

"And me, too," chimed in Cecil.

"Well, I think five is enough out of one house," my mother said. "Ah! here comes your father; I am sure he will be of my opinion."

My father came in abruptly, and I could see there was a cloud on his face. His manner, too, was much more dull and grave than usual.

"Yes; you all look very well," he said; "I will walk down the street with you."

"But you had no dinner," my mother interposed; "you must be tired. One of the servants can take the children."

My father, however, made no reply, but strode out of the room again, calling to us to follow. We were soon flocking after him, hearing our mother's parting words, "Good-bye, dear children; I hope you will have a nice party;" while she discouraged Cecil and

Ralph from inflicting on Myra and me too many farewell hugs and kisses, which would disarrange our hair !

My father waited at the little iron gate as we passed out ; then he bid the boys and Myra walk on, and said to me,—

“ I wish to speak to you, Louisa.”

His voice was ominously strange in its tone, and he called me Louisa, which he never did but on very serious occasions.

“ I have heard something to-day which has distressed me. Miss Tinlay, the governess at the Manor, has a very bad attack of scarlet fever. I see her daily ; and this morning she told me that, in spite of her warnings and entreaties, you persisted in walking with Margaret Lee in a lane one day when they met you in the pony carriage. Miss Tinlay is very ill, and speaks with great difficulty, so that I could scarcely understand her. What day were you guilty of this act of gross disobedience ? ”

“ It was the day I went with you to Heath Farm,” I faltered.

"You do not know what you may have done," said my father.

"I did not think there could be any harm—and in the open air, too!—besides, I could not help myself; Margaret Lee would walk with me. I did not think it was wrong."

"Why did you not tell me, then? No, Louisa, it weakens my confidence in you very much. I should have forbidden you to go to the party this evening as a punishment; but then I must have told your mother, and I wish to spare her, though it seems you do not."

I felt vexed and angry with myself and with my father, and I answered pertly,—

"You go where there is scarlet fever every day, and you never think of the risk of bringing it home to us."

"You are wrong, Louie; I think of it a great deal, and I never sit down to dinner with my children in the same clothes in which I have been standing by the beds of fever patients."

We were at the Palmers' door now, and



**"We were at the Palmer's' door now, and my father turned away." — Page 103.**

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my father turned away, saying, in a voice that went to my heart,—

“I have been greatly disappointed in you throughout these holidays, Louie ;” and then he was gone.

I felt very much inclined to run up the street after him, and say I was sorry, and confess my fault and ask forgiveness, but it was too late.

The Palmers’ door was open, and the servant stood ready to admit us. The hall was brightly illuminated and decorated with evergreens and holly, and looked very tempting. Children in white frocks with blue and pink ribbons were passing across it. My brothers and sisters looked to me as the eldest to precede them into the house, and Charlie said, “Come, Lou, what are you thinking about ?” I was thinking of my father’s words—“I am very much disappointed in you ;” and, do what I would, they haunted me throughout the evening.

The party was, as my brothers had foretold, made as much as possible to resemble



the one at Lee Manor the year before. There was a Christmas-tree, from which a great many pretty presents were dispensed, to the wonder and delight of the children. Christmas trees were then a novelty, and are now out of fashion; but, as I have said before, I think children in my day were not so *blasè* and satiated with pleasure as now. To my mind, the institution of a Christmas-tree in every household would be a great gain: however small the offerings, however insignificant they may seem, the idea remains. The light of every home shines at Christmas with the glow which was kindled first at Bethlehem, and His gifts have been poured upon us since that starry night when the shepherds saw the shining of the unwonted glory, and heard the song which told of the greatest gifts to man—Peace and Good-will.

This particular Christmas-tree was a grand one: so it looks to me even through the haze of years. It was tall and straight, and well shaped, and its burden was costly and well

chosen, and every one was satisfied with their presents. Then came games of various kinds, and all was wound up by a very grand supper. "Quite a grown-up supper," my little brother Jem called it, much to the amusement of Mr. Albert Palmer, of whom Charlie and Rupert rather stood in awe.

I tried to throw myself into all that was passing, and enjoy it; and when we went into supper, I had almost succeeded in banishing disagreeable thoughts. Mr. Albert Palmer, who, by-the-bye, was a Rugby boy of sixteen, pulled crackers with me, and talked grown-up talk. At last he touched upon the subject I had tried to forget. He liked to boast of his intimacy with the Lees, and began to lament the absence of the young Lees during these holidays.

"And now," he went on, "the governess has chosen to fall ill; no one knows when the house will be free of infection. Such a horrid thing—scarlet fever: people catch it from paper, and books, and anything. I suppose you have seen nothing of the Lees?"

"No," I answered abruptly; "that is, I have only seen Margaret once."

"Ah," said Mr. Albert Palmer graciously, "and she is a great deal taken up with the Scotts now. Lady Florence is at the Manor very often. She had the scarlet fever not long ago; so there is no fear of infection for her. Do you know her?"

"No," I said; "papa does not attend Lord Manvers."

Albert Palmer gave a short laugh, and said, with more point than good taste,—

"Oh, your acquaintances are all patients, I suppose!"

At eleven o'clock we separated; and this party, so earnestly longed for and desired, was over. The boys and Myra and I got home about ten minutes past eleven; Thomas, our general man-servant, having come down the hill to escort us. When we went up stairs, eager to display our presents, I was surprised that neither my father nor mother came out to meet us. At the top of the stairs we saw nurse.

"Hush! do not make a noise," she said. "Your mamma is very poorly, and is gone to bed; she had a very bad headache, and I am going to keep baby with me to-night."

"Where is papa?" we asked.

"Called out again to the Manor; the governess there is much worse. Master Jem, if you blow that horn to-night I'll just take it away, and you shall not have it again!"

Jem contented himself with brandishing the proscribed horn in nurse's face, and making a raid on a box of bon-bons which he had carried off from the tree. All our tongues, which had been inclined to run very fast about the delights of the evening, were silenced. Our mother was always ready to hear every detail and sympathise in our pleasure; and, as she was not there, it seemed scarcely worth while telling it all to nurse: so we went off one by one to our rooms, from the nursery fire, silently and gravely.

Myra and I took off our pretty muslin frocks, and prepared for bed. I lingered up

a long time after my sister, hoping to hear my father return. I opened the door and listened several times, but the house was silent; only the ticking of the great clock in the hall, which sounded loud and distinct in the stillness. A dead weight was at my heart, and I could not rise above it. Presently Myra spoke :—

“Louie, do come to bed; you keep me awake, and I am so sleepy. What are you doing?”

“Nothing,” I said, closing the door. “I only wanted to know if papa had come home. Miss Tinlay must be very ill, or they would not have sent for him so late.”

Myra said, in a sleepy voice, “I hope mamma will be well again to-morrow; I hope she has not got the scarlet fever.”

“What nonsense!” I said sharply. “You absurd child, pray do not put such an idea into anybody’s head. Good-night.”

Then I blew out the candle; and, lying down in my bed, I covered my face with the clothes, and burst into sobs, which I tried in

vain to repress, as I said over and over to myself that I could not bear it—that I would die sooner than my gentle, tender mother should have the dreaded fever, brought to the house, perhaps, by me—by me!

Ah! how vain is a late repentance! how little do we know what one step in the wrong direction may bring upon us! Years of trouble and sorrow may follow thereon. Why do we not, old and young, strive to bring our wills into subjection? Why do we not pray to be delivered from yielding to temptation, and in small as well as in great things to know no will but God's? Especially do the young need to pray for guidance every hour of every day, to pray for the habit of recollecting the Eye that is upon them, and is in all places, beholding the evil and the good. From one tiny act of disobedience rivers of sorrow have flooded many a soul, and gone well-nigh to engulf it in their depths.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE SHADOW OF A GREAT CLOUD.

"PERHAPS it is a false alarm: perhaps she will be better to-morrow." This was my last thought as I fell asleep, and slept as children do sleep, very soundly, in spite of trouble and anxiety. "Mamma will be better to-morrow," I repeated, trying to reassure myself. Then I remembered no more till I awoke to the consciousness of broad daylight—the winter sun shining brightly, and nurse standing by my bed, saying,—

"Come, Miss Louie, it is past nine o'clock."

"Past nine o'clock! how late!" Then I rubbed my eyes, and the remembrance of the Palmers' party brought with it the weight at my heart.

"How is mamma?" I asked, starting up.  
"Is she better?"

"Is she better?" Myra echoed from the other little bed.

"No," nurse said, sadly; "she is no better: her throat is so bad, she can't swallow a cup of tea. You had better make haste and dress, my dear; remember, you are not to go near your mamma's room. I must go back to the children, poor little things. Baby will be crying."

Myra and I began our dressing silently, and were almost ready to go downstairs before either spoke. Then Myra said,—

"What do you think is the matter with mamma, Louie? Is it scarlet fever?"

"I don't know," I answered shortly.

"People always have sore throats in scarlet fever, and there are so many ill with it just now. Oh, I shall be so frightened if it really is scarlet fever, Louie!"

"Fear will do no good," I answered.  
"Now, do be quiet, Myra; I want to say my prayers, and I can't think how you can go on



talking as you do about scarlet fever : pray be quiet ! ”

I knelt by my bed for a few minutes, but I could not even repeat my accustomed form of prayer. I was in a maze of conflicting thoughts. I ran down into the dining-room, hoping to find my father there ; but there were only Charlie and Rupert quarrelling with each other about the right of pouring out the tea, and wrangling sharply and disagreeably about some toast. In a moment I felt the blank my mother's absence made. I felt helpless and forlorn. But I had not much time to think. My father came in almost immediately, and called me out of the room. I followed him to his surgery ; and then I stood, like a criminal, awaiting my judgment.

I was quite unprepared for the look of extreme distress and pain which I saw in my father's face. He had spoken angrily to me the night before, but he spoke only sorrowfully now.

“ Louie,” he said, “ your mother is very

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"I knelt by my bed for a few minutes." — *Page 118.*

she has been very ill all night. I cannot doubt what the disorder is. I know it to be scarlet fever, this virulent type which is proving so fatal just now. Miss Tinlay at the Manor is dying: nothing will save her."

"Oh, father!" I gasped, "is it my fault, is it my fault about mamma, about mother?"

"My dear!" my father said kindly and sadly, "my dear, how can I dare to say so, when I may have been the medium of infection myself? Only, Louie, if I have brought this terrible disease to my wife and children, I did it in the path of duty."

"Yes," I groaned, "and if I have done it, it was by disobedience—by deceit. Oh, father! Oh, papa! I can't bear it! I would rather die!"

"Hush, Louie!" my father said solemnly, "do not talk about dying: death is too serious a thing to speak of lightly: we die or live as it pleases God."

"Let me go to mother! let me nurse her! Oh, pray do!"

"No, Louie! in the course of the day I

must make arrangements to send all the children away ; it will make her mind easier to know you are out of the house. But," said my father, rubbing his brow, with a look of sad bewilderment, "I know not where to send you. Wherever it is, you, Louie, must take upon yourself the responsibility of an elder sister. I cannot send nurse away from the baby and your mother, for poor baby must remain here. So I must look to you for help, and to take care of your brothers and sisters. Now, then, I have a great deal upon me, and I must not linger."

He turned away, and even then I was conscious of feeling vexed that I might not stay and help to nurse my mother. I would rather have done that. I would far rather have scarlet fever than leave her, I thought : and then to have all the children on my hands in a lodging !

The weary day passed on, the longest day I ever spent. The children were brought down into the dining-room to be as far away as possible from my mother's room. The

boys were allowed to play in the garret, and Myra and I, had Cecil, Ralph, and Jem with us in the dining-room. The maids were all busy making preparations for our departure, for we were to go somewhere before night if possible. But no tidings of an asylum were brought for us. My father came in and out several times: he was making every inquiry for lodgings; but he was too conscientious to send us anywhere without telling what the circumstances were. So many of our friends would have done anything for us, if the complaint which had entered our home had been anything but scarlet fever,—that dreaded word, which has been, and is, a terror to so many aching hearts.

About four o'clock, I was sitting by the window, with Cecil on my knee. He was scarcely more than a baby; and, thoroughly tired, was subsiding into quietness, which I hoped might foretell sleep, when I saw a stout figure in black, stop at the iron gate, and open it. I did not recognise her as any one whom I knew, and thought she was a

patient who had come to consult my father. Presently, one of the servants opened the door and said,—

“Mrs. Browne wishes to see you, Miss Louie.”

And, before I could rise to meet her, Mrs. Browne was standing close to me.

“Don’t get up, Missie,” she said, “let the pretty dear sleep. I am come on business, and as your papa is not at home, you will please to hear what I’ve got to say.”

“My father may be here directly,” I interposed, rather dreading a story of the aches and pains of my visitor; “he generally sees patients in the morning at home, but ——”

“My dear, I am not come to trouble him about my concerns to-day. No, there has been enough of that for three years; and come when I might, and send when I might, the doctor was always ready. I ain’t one to forget how he has come to my precious child in rain and storm, by day or night. She is past all that now, but I ain’t the one to be ungrateful, if I know myself; and so to-day, when Mr. Small, the butcher, came with his

cart to the Farm, and when he said, 'The scarlet fever has broken out in the doctor's house, Mrs. Browne, and there's all the children, he does not know what to do with them—he has got no lodging for them—the folks in the town are all so frightened of the fever; and there are now three children lying dead of it.' Well—I thought to myself—our house is desolate enough, for only a week ago, and we laid our only one in the grave. So I said to my good man, 'The doctor was our Lucy's best friend, let us take all his children in at Heath Farm. It is fine pure air, and we ain't afraid of scarlet fever: we've nobody to catch it but our two selves, not that I think we shall catch it.' And the long and short of it is, that I've come to say, if you young ladies and gentlemen will put up with the ways of a farm house, you are all heartily welcome. Gold could never pay the doctor for what he has done for us. No! not all the gold of the Indies: and it is a happy proud day for me to feel that I can do the leastest thing for him now, that it is."



I could not have edged in a word sideways into Mrs. Browne's harangue if I had tried, but I did not try. Her wide honest face, on which were traces of her grief, looked straight into mine, and finally bursting into tears, she said,—

"My Lucy might have been just such another as you. When I had her for twelve years, rosy and pretty as any spring flower, I did not think there could be any worm at the root; but there was, and oh, what she has suffered only the dear Lord, who has taken her to Himself, can ever tell. But there, I want to think and talk of your troubles now, not of my own. How is your dear mamma, and the baby, too, poor little thing?"

"Mamma is very ill," I said; "her throat is so painful, but papa hopes she will be better to-morrow."

"Ah, I hope so, indeed," said Mrs. Browne; "but, dear soul, she has looked so fading-like for some long time. Many have said to me the doctor's lady is a great deal altered."

I did not like the turn the conversation had taken, and began to doubt if going to Heath Farm would be an unmixed advantage. The farmer's wife, who had displayed to me poor Lucy's skeleton-like arm, and pressed upon me elder-berry wine and thin biscuits, began to take the place of the comely woman in her deep mourning dress, whose gratitude to my father had so won my heart, when she first opened her mission. It was a great relief when my father came in, heard Mrs. Browne's offer, grasped her hand, and closed with it at once.

By five o'clock a fly from the White Horse came rumbling up the street to take us over the wide open moorland to Heath Farm. Mrs. Browne preceded us in her gig, and Rupert and Charlie were allowed to drive with her; while Myra, the little ones, Susie the nursemaid, and myself, were packed in the fly, with our luggage.

What a strange dream-like departure it was from home, so different to any we had ever known before. Myra and I especially

had pleaded hard to be allowed to bid our mother good-bye—just to go to her bedroom door, to peep in, and so take our leave. But no; our father was inexorable. Nurse stood at the window with Winifred in her arms, watching us; I fixed my eyes on baby as the last link with my mother, and I was sure I saw nurse hastily wipe her eyes with her handkerchief, though she nodded and smiled at Cecil and Ralph, who kept up a chorus of “Good-bye,” “Good-bye,” in the ringing voices of childhood. All was novelty and excitement to them, poor little boys; and Jem and Charlie and Rupert were for the time carried away by visions of the delight of farm-house life, and forgot why this sudden move had been necessary. But Myra and I could not forget; and as we drove off, I saw tears silently running down Myra’s face, while my own heart felt as if it would break.

Great kindness was shown us at Heath Farm, the kindness which sprang from intense gratitude to my father. We found two large rooms made ready for us. The three elder

boys occupied one, and Myra and me and the little ones the other; while Susie was disposed of at the back of the house, and shared an attic with the rosy-cheeked girl who came out and assisted me to get down from the carriage on the day that Lucy died.

Bright January weather, when the days lengthen, and the little timid aconite in the hedge, or a tiny hepatica bud in the garden peep out, always bring to my mind now that time we spent at Heath Farm. Eagerly did Myra and I watch for coming figures along the road across the common as daylight waned every afternoon, and the time for receiving the latest accounts of my mother arrived. My father promised that he would not fail to let us know—and he kept his word. But oh! the suspense, as day after day went on, and the report was always “no better.” Sometimes our father rode over on Presto. Sometimes he drove in the carriage. Sometimes he sent over the servant Thomas. We were usually on the look out, and would run to the gate and strain every nerve to

catch the full meaning of what was said ; for my father did not come himself within the gate, nor allow any messenger to do so. We were bound, he said, to use the utmost precaution for the sake of the good people who had received us, as well as for our own.

"We have nothing to lose," Mrs. Browne would say pathetically, "and if you feel ill any of you, dears, I would nurse you. I know something about illness now. Don't I, father?" she would appeal to the farmer; who would answer, "Ay, wife—ay, my dear—you do, indeed."

A week had worn away, and I began to feel more and more depressed about my mother. The poor governess at the Manor was dead, and one of the servants very ill. My father's hands were full, and his heart heavy. Never, never can I forget the afternoon when, after long waiting by the gate, we—that is, Myra and I—retreated behind the prescribed barrier, as we saw Presto appearing on the long straight road, his form standing out distinctly against the daffodil

sky, from which the sun had just gone down, leaving a streak of rosy red in the horizon. "Is it papa or Thomas this afternoon?" we questioned; and then the boys came rushing in from the farmyard, but saying in subdued tones, which were unlike their accustomed ones, "It is papa on Presto: how fast he is riding!" and then, in another moment, our father pulled up by the iron gate. We were all there by this time,—an anxious, eager crowd. Little Cecil shouted, "Papa, papa!" but no one else spoke. Our father's face told its own tale. He dismounted from Presto and came within hearing.

"Louie, my dear child, your mother is worse; the fever is less, but her throat is very bad, and her strength"—there was a sound of a suppressed sob, and then a moment's pause—"her strength is failing. God only knows how it will end. You must pray to Him, my children, and try to be good; try to be as she would wish. Poor things! poor children!" my father repeated tenderly and sadly—half to himself,—while Presto

rubbed his nose fondly against his master's arm, and seemed to know that trouble hovered near.

"How is baby, papa?" It was Myra who spoke.

"Quite well: so is nurse, and so am I, thank God! Now run in, my children, run in, it is getting cold. I will send or come to-morrow morning. Good-bye, God bless you!"

Then my father remounted Presto, and, gathering up his reins, prepared to start. But I could not let him go thus. I suddenly sprang forward, and, opening the iron gate, went out and caught his hand.

"Father!" I gasped, "do you think I took the scarlet fever from Miss Tinlay? pray, pray answer me!"

"Poor child!" was my father's answer. "My poor little Louie, no, I do not think so; the fever is everywhere, and I am exposed to it on all sides. It is too probable that I carried the infection to your mother. Run in, my dear; run in, Louie: try to be a

mother to the little ones; try to be to them what she would wish you to be!"

My father gently pushed me away and turned Presto's head. In another minute I was left alone, the sound of the horse's feet growing fainter and more faint, the clear sky above my head, and in my heart an exceeding bitter pain, such as in all my after life I have never known surpassed.



## CHAPTER VI.

## A MESSAGE FROM LUCY'S BIBLE.

ON this evening I had my first experience of trouble which weighed me to the very earth, of a grief which was sharpened by pangs of self-reproach and yet could not be indulged. As I stood cold and paralysed by the gate, listening to Presto's retreating footsteps, I only craved to be alone to give vent to the sorrow which was welling up in my heart. But I was aroused from it, by the sound of little Cecil's cry; he fell as he was going back to the house, and struck his forehead against the stone step. I heard him scream and call "Louie! Louie!" and I ran to his help. He was dependent on me; they were all dependent on me in some way; and I

must rouse myself for their sakes. I did my best, and so did Myra, though her voice was choked with sobs, and her tears could not be repressed. I remember going through the necessary formality of tea, cutting bread and butter, settling a dispute between two of my little brothers, and pouring out tea, as if I were made of stone. Then, after tea, when Susan had taken Cecil and Ralph to bed, I went on reading, as my brothers asked me, though, while my lips pronounced the words, my thoughts were far away from the book.

At last it was over, and the poor boys went to bed. Rupert's fervent hug almost broke me down : it expressed all the trouble lying deep in his boyish heart. Poor Myra laid her head on my shoulder for a minute ; and I kissed her hair, and soothed her, thinking how our mother would have done it. Then she went slowly up to bed, and I, with the candle in my hand, prepared to follow.

Myra left the door open, as she supposed me to be close behind her ; and I saw a light in the room on the other side of the passage—

the room from which I had a sort of nervous shrinking—the room where Lucy had died. Something, however, this evening, seemed to attract me to this room, and I crossed the passage and looked in. A small candle lamp, with a green shade perforated with holes, which was in those days thought a novelty, stood on a table by the bed—a little sofa bed—which was neatly made as if an occupant were expected. On the table were some books; one was open; it was the Bible. As no one was in the room, I advanced cautiously and trembling, with a curious mixture of awe and dread mingled with my sorrow. Casting a glance round the room, I saw some carefully-preserved geraniums in pots on a stand, a shelf full of more books, and several pictures. A little work-basket with some white wool knitting was also on the table. I saw the row was unfinished, and the needles lying transversely, just as the knitter might have put them down. Evidently everything was purposely left, just as it had been when Lucy lay in the little white bed. It seemed to

bring home to me the depth of a mother's love, when I looked at the traces of it before me,—a love which had had its refining power on poor Mrs. Browne's homely nature, and constrained her to treasure up all these relics of her only child, untouched. I went to the table and looked down at the Bible; it was large print, and was open at the fourteenth chapter of St. John's Gospel. Oh, how many, many tearful eyes have read, and how many aching hearts have felt comfort from the infinite sympathy and Divine compassion breathed in those words:—

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

These words of Jesus wrung from me a low cry of “Mother! Mother!” and, kneeling down, I prayed as I had never prayed before.

Not for my mother's life—so much as for forgiveness—so much as for help in my sore distress—help to amend and be different, to find the Way, and the Truth, and the Life, and through Him to meet my mother again. I gave her up to Him, in that moment telling Him all the burden and all the sorrow which oppressed me; and, as I told Him, I seemed to hear His voice: "Let not your heart be troubled!" It is long years ago since that night, and yet I can recall every sound, every circumstance of the hour when I knelt by Lucy's Bible; and as One whom His mother comforteth, so did God comfort me.

I do not know how long I knelt there. I was roused by Mrs. Browne's frightened voice:—

"Who is it? Miss Louie, my dear! you have given me such a turn. Come in, father, come in," she said, "it is only poor Miss Louie."

"I hope I have not done wrong in coming here," I said, staggering to my feet. "I——"

"Wrong! No, bless you," said Mrs. Browne. "Poor dear, don't fret! Maybe God will spare

your mamma. Father and I come in here every night to read a verse of God's Word, and think of our lamb. We don't wish to touch anything, and here it is, just as she left it. These pictures she was so fond of, your papa got for her, and all the books were presents from some ladies who used to call on her. The flowers she watched all winter, and so pleased she was the day before she died to see that little blossom on the sweet scented geranium. Ah, well! she is where never withering flowers abide, as the hymn says. The Bible is open at her favourite chapter. We don't like to move it, do we, father? She could say that chapter by heart. But, oh! my dear, don't cry so," said the kind woman, "the doctor will have his wife spared to him yet."

Mrs. Browne's tender, sympathising voice touched my heart. I went up to her, and, laying my hand on her breast, I mingled my tears with hers.

"You had better go to bed, my lamb. Father is shy and awkward—you'll excuse that.

But you are sorry for the young lady, ain' you, father?"

The farmer, a great big man, as big and burly as his wife, had been standing at the threshold of the door all this time; and now when his wife addressed him, could only rub his head and mutter something about—

"I am indeed sorry—Missie knows that."

"Yes, yes, as I say, our own grief make us all the more sorry for hers, bless her, and the dear, good doctor's—our poor Lucy's best friend. But, my dear, I'll see you up-stairs.

As I passed the good farmer I saw his eyes were wet with tears, which he rubbed away with the back of his hand, as he struggled to say, in answer to my good-night—

"God bless you, Missie!"

I lay tossing about much of the wear night. My head ached, and my eyes were so heavy with crying, that I could scarcely rouse myself to get up the next morning. But I felt I must be up early. A messenger from Pressborough might arrive at any moment and bring tidings that I should not know

how to bear. The children all exclaimed, when I went down to breakfast, that I looked ill and strange, and Myra gently said,—

“Let me make the tea and cut the bread this morning, Louie: I am sure you are not well.”

No, I felt as if I must go through my routine—I must do what my mother would wish me to do at any cost.

Just as I was trying to eat a piece of the home-made bread, with which Mrs. Browne supplied us so liberally, the sound of horses' feet made us all start. “Presto, I know!” Rupert said. And yet though we all started to our feet, we did not rush out to the iron gate. One by one we followed each other; I was the last this time. I saw it was Thomas, and not my father: and then a mist came over my eyes, and I remember falling heavily on the ground, but nothing more—I had fainted for the first time in my life.



## CHAPTER VII.

## CONCLUSION.

WHEN I came to myself I was lying on my bed, Mrs. Browne standing over me. I heard her voice, as if it were a long way off, saying,—

“My dear Miss Louie! my poor lamb! there is a little hope of your mamma, my dear!”

Then I remember struggling hard to speak, and the words would not come; and then it was all a blank again for many days. I had sickened of the fever—the dreaded fever in its worst form. It attacked my head as well as my throat, and the eruption could not be brought out. I was delirious and wandered in my talk, and my cry was ever the same cry—“Mother! mother!”

So good Mrs. Browne told me afterwards, when, perhaps not very wisely, she went over the details of much that I had said. But she nursed me faithfully, and returned my father's kindness to her Lucy tenfold. The other children escaped the fever except Cecil: and his was a very slight attack, and he was well in a few days! No one belonging to the household at Heath Farm suffered from our presence there. "Mrs. Browne said she had faith to believe that she should never see cause to repent doing what she could to help my father." She was a good woman, with all the simplicity and truthfulness which we often meet with in women of her class, and which suffers no harm by contact with the so-called refinements of society, too often, alas, less refined than hollow.

My recovery was very slow. Day after day I lay faint and weary on the bed, too tired and feeble to take much heed of what was passing. But, as the February days lengthened, tiny pencil notes began to come from my mother, and communication with

her was opened once more, which in itself revived me.

One day—a March day of unusual beauty—when my father's step was heard on the stairs, my heart beat fast. I felt some one was with him. The door opened, and he came in—my mother on his arm.

There are moments in all our lives of which we cannot speak or write—this was one. The past seemed like a terrible dream; and, as I sat with my hand in my mother's, we were both too happy and too thankful for words.

"We have both been on the border land, Louie," she said once. "Let us try to take back some lessons into life, from the dark shadows of illness, and pain, and sorrow: let us pray that they shall not be in vain for us."

We all went to the seaside as soon as I could be moved: and with the return of health and strength came again my temptations to my old habits of self-sparing and self-pleasing. But I think I may say that

my eyes were opened to see wherein I had so often failed; and that from that time I *did* strive to amend. I felt as if I could not do enough for baby Winifred, and for my mother; and the little ones would run to me for help or amusement with less fear of the repulse I had too often given them in old days, when any exertion implied a sacrifice of my own inclination.

At the end of our two months at the seaside, we were all strong and well again, and returned to Pressborough in the middle of May, full of life and hope, and full of love to each other.

But I must end here the story of my holidays—of that tiny bit of my life into which so much was crowded—upon which I so often look back—and which I do often feel, thank God, was the turning-point in the history of my youth.

I would say, in parting, that there is no battle to be fought against self and sin—no victory to be hoped for—no success to be achieved—unless we go to Him who is “the

Way, the Truth, and the Life"—to Him who spoke to me in that saddest night of my life from the page of poor Lucy's Bible—to Him who *can* make us more than conquerors—who can and *will* make us conquerors, if we trust and follow Him with our whole hearts.

Days of youth are far from me now; I have left them behind me long, long ago. Voices that I have loved are still and hushed. Lines of care are traced upon brows I remember smooth and unclouded. Threads of grey are in the hair I once knew golden bright. Empty places—vacant seats—change and decay on all around I have seen. But from my heart I can say there is One who can never change; and He is the same to-day as when in my distress I went to Him on the night that I told Him of my disobedience and my sin; and His grace is sufficient, His strength made perfect in weakness, His peace such as the world can never give and never take away.

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